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ABSTRACT

Beginning with the spring 1974 semester, all incoming students at Borough of Manhattan Community College (New York) were tested using the Reading subtest of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills, Level II. Students achieving scores lower than the fifth stanine on beginning grade 12 norms were required to take a remedial reading course. The objective of the remedial reading program was to develop minimal 12th grade reading skills in students requiring remediation. Post-test scores on the Stanford Test were compared to placement scores and midterm scores for 30 classes of remedial reading students in fall 1974 (n=760) and fall 1975 (n=623). Results indicated mean gains of approximately four grade levels for one semester of instruction. However, only 55% of the remedial students successfully passed the course by meeting the 12th grade criterion. Data indicated that students with higher initial levels of reading ability had a greater chance of successfully completing the course than students with lower initial levels of reading ability. In addition, the percentage of students passing the course was found to have declined between spring 1973 and fall 1975 from 68% to 55%. While the program was concluded to be at least 50% successful, further study of reading level and scholastic achievement was recommended. (JDS)

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EFFECTIVENESS OF REMEDIAL READING COURSES IN UPGRADING SKILLS OF UNDERPREPARED STUDENTS WHO ENTERED MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE UNDER THE OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICY

by

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Borough of Manhattan Community College

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NOVA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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ABSTRACT

As a result of a new open admissions policy the Borough of Manhattan Community College received applications from students representing a broad spectrum of social, ethnic, and academic backgrounds. With the admission of these underprepared students the college recognized the need for a comprehensive remedial program.

This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the remedial reading courses which were instituted to upgrade the skills of the open admissions students. To determine the extent of reading skills improvement alternate forms of the TASK test were administered during several semesters and the results were compared to initial scores of students from the placement tests. The relationship between initial reading levels and final letter grades was determined. The distribution of final grades was used to determine the percentages of students passing the course.

The results indicated that the overall gain in reading skills competence as measured by the TASK was four grade levels in one semester. The reading courses were effective to the extent that 55% to 65% of open admissions students passed by demonstrating at least 12th grade reading skills as measured by the TASK.

The results further demonstrated that students beginning the course in the 3rd and 4th stanines had a better chance of passing than those students falling in the 1st and 2nd stanines.

Given these results it was recommended that the reading courses be expanded into a sequence of levels so that a student could begin at a lower level and advance to a higher level the next semester, without the stigma of failure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION		PAGE
I	INTRODUCTION	1
II	BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE	3
III	PROCEDURES	12
IV	RESULTS	13
V	DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
	REFERENCES CITED	31

TABLES

Table 1	Pretest, midterm and posttest means of selected classes on the reading test of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills	13
Table 2	Percentage distribution of stanine scores of selected classes on the reading test of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills	14
Table 3	Relationship between final grades and initial stanine on TASK reading test, Fall, 1975	15
Table 4	Distribution of final grades, Fall, 1973	16
Table 5	Distribution of final grades, Spring, 1974	17
Table 6	Distribution of final grades, Fall, 1974	18
Table 7	Distribution of final grades, Spring, 1975	19
Table 8	Distribution of final grades, Fall, 1975	20
Table 9	Distribution of final grades, Spring, 1976	21
Table 10	Distribution of final passing grades, Spring, 1973, to Spring, 1976, inclusively	23

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1970, the City University of New York, through its policy making body, the Board of Higher Education, began the implementation of an open admissions policy. This policy mandated open admissions procedures for both the four year and the community colleges of the University. The policy specified that all graduates of New York City high schools would be guaranteed a place in the City University. The policy therefore opened the doors of the University to students who would not have met the previously rigid and competitive admissions requirements and standards. Thus underprepared students would be admitted tc pursue studies in higher education.

An immediate problem resulting from the open admissions policy was to develop resources within the University to meet the remedial needs of the underprepared students. At the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) a specialized department emerged to offer specific programs in remediation. It was named the Department of Developmental Skills. Among the programs developed and offered were courses in remedial reading. The open admissions policy of the University was very clearly stated and implemented. The concomitant problems of dealing with the educational needs of remedial students was not so easily implemented and resolved. In short, a policy was formulated

and implemented with no ground rules for meeting the needs of the new students. In a short span of time new faculty members were hired at BMCC to develop and institute a variety of remedial courses to prepare the open admissions students for college level studies. The reading courses finally emerged and were officially offered in the Spring, 1973, semester. Since 1973, both the Department and the Office of Instructional Testing have amassed data relative to the reading courses. Some data has been analyzed and reported. The purpose of this study was to utilize both raw data (secondary) and analyzed data to demonstrate the degree of effectiveness of the reading courses in upgrading the reading skills of the new open admissions students. Heretofore data had been generated, and in some instances analyzed on a semester by semester basis. This study sought to present and analyze data over a period of several semesters. It addressed itself to the evaluation of the reading courses in terms of the degree of student improvement in those reading skills which the program intended to develop. The bulk of the data used in this study is based on the results of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills, Level II, Reading Test (TASK). The extent of improvement in reading competence of open admissions students was determined through the use of alternate forms of the TASK test administered at midterm and at the end of the term.

The study cites the test results of two semesters. Also considered as an indicator of course effectiveness was the distribution of final grades and the percentages of students passing. Further, the study utilized previously analyzed data to determine the extent to which the initial reading level of students is related to the success of the program.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The policy of open admissions was steeped in controversy since its inception. It was not a policy which the University adopted purely as a matter of course in the administration of a dynamic institution. The policy was adopted only after a period of several years of investigations, debates and proposals. The Board of Higher Education was under constant pressure from civic and community groups as well as militant student factions anxious for an open admissions policy. As a result of these pressures, the Board of Higher Education during the years, 1968-1969, began to include provisions for expanded educational opportunities and the implementation of open admissions, in the Master Plan for the City University of New York (Board of Higher Education, 1968, 1969, 1969a). The year 1975 was set as the target date for initiating the policy of open admissions. Thus a most exciting and controversial educational policy was

to be implemented in the near future. However, this target date was not satisfying to the various pressure groups. These groups wanted the policy to be established right away, not at some future time. With the continued pressure which remained unabated, the Board finally moved to set the target date for the implementation of open enrollment. On July 10, 1969, the New York Times (page 1, Col. 1) reported that the Board set 1970, instead of 1975, as the target date for offering admission to all high school graduates of New York City schools. At the time the Board further directed the Chancellor to determine the feasibility of implementing the new admissions policy. Thus the policy was adopted and the mechanism for implementation was set in motion. The policy as adopted guaranteed a place in the University for every New York City graduate beginning with the class of 1970 (Board of Higher Education, 1969).

This study is tied to the implementation of an educational policy - that of open admissions. Formulating and adopting a policy is one thing. Carrying out the policy successfully is something else. Open admissions was easily implemented. All of the colleges within the University were mandated to open their doors to all high school graduates. What was not clearly mandated was the manner in which open admissions students would be educated. Before the policy was implemented it was

evident that the open admissions students did not have the same minimum levels of academic skills as those students formerly admitted under traditional standards. In fact the controversy surrounding open admissions was intensified when the policy was implemented. Opponents argued that the University would have to lower its standards of educational excellence in order to meet the needs of the underprepared students now being accepted into higher education.

Each college within the University had to develop its own guidelines for working with the new students. What was clear to all was that some form of remediation was absolutely necessary to insure the success of the open admissions policy. Some feared that the open admissions policy was merely a "revolving door" to satisfy the pressure groups that forced the University to adopt the policy in the first place (Miller, 1972). As it turned out each college was responsible for its own remedial procedures.

The Borough of Manhattan Community College was slow to develop a formal remedial plan. In the overall development of remediation within the College several administrators were hired and subsequently faced non-reappointment in the painful process of developing remedial procedures and programs.

From the Fall of 1970, to the Fall of 1972, the College experimented with an integrated approach to remediation (Schiavone, 1976). Integrated remediation offered the underprepared student several areas of approach through which he could overcome his deficiencies. This approach permitted the student to enter the mainstream of the College by taking college level courses in the first semester while simultaneously pursuing one or more remedial modalities of instruction. At the College, English and mathematics curricula were developed and implemented with remediation as a built-in factor. Remediation took place in the regular college class as part of the individualization of instruction. Faculty members posted their office hours which were utilized by students in need of additional guidance. A peer tutoring program was implemented to assist students with their college level courses. The College Media Center provided space and materials of individualized instruction in the language arts and mathematics.

With all of this the College did not complete the integrated approach through the addition of specific remedial courses. In fact the integrated approach did not succeed at the College because it was not complete. In the meantime other colleges of the University were moving ahead with the development of specific remedial courses. The Board eventually prevailed upon the College

administration and faculty to come up with more specific and detailed programs of remediation. This was necessary since the open admissions policy ushered into the College students representing a broad spectrum of social, ethnic, and academic backgrounds which underscored the need for a comprehensive remedial program. The main purpose of college remediation is to accommodate the underprepared student so that he will be able to successfully pursue college studies. Several of the major problems inherent in the development and implementation of college remedial programs have been identified (Schiavone, 1973). The BMCC faculty had to address these major problems. They had to consider such questions as which students should receive remedial help? Should remedial courses be offered for credit? Should separate departments be established? What funding and facilities should be made available? How can the attrition rate be held down? How can counseling deal effectively with underprepared students? Also necessary for the faculty was a penetrating look at what has been described as the "new student" (Cross, 1971). This student's profile is characterized as one who avoids work, reads little, seems passive and incurious, needs a great deal of structure and reinforcement and seems to lack communication skills. The remedial programs designed for these students must have an impact on their education

and subsequent educational accomplishments. In short, the program must work (Losak, 1972), and it must be realistically evaluated (Sharon, 1972).

The literature cited here has been deliberately brief relating to highly specific factors in college remedial programs. A thorough review of the literature would constitute a separate study in itself revealing that the merits of open admissions have been extolled and disputed, its various techniques have been scrutinized and analyzed, and the social implications of the policy itself have been argued nationally. In fact the literature is voluminous, each author expressing opinions that are favorable, negative, confused or apathetic.

By the Fall of 1973, the College had officially created a Department of Developmental Skills. The department comprised two units respectively: remedial reading; and English as a Second Language. The mathematics department would offer courses in remedial mathematics and the English department would offer remedial courses in intensive writing. The three departments would assume all responsibility for the remediation needs of open admissions students.

In order to determine student needs a placement testing program was initiated by a newly established Office of Instructional Testing and Research. On the basis of standardized test scores students were placed in English as a Second Language, intensive writing, remedial reading and remedial mathematics.

This study concerned itself with the remedial reading courses of the Department of Developmental Skills. Since remedial reading constitutes a key factor in the successful implementation of open admissions at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, a closer look at the effectiveness of the reading courses through standardized test results was deemed to be of significance to the institution while contributing to the literature already amassed regarding the policy.

Beginning with the Spring, 1974, semester, the Reading Subtest of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK), Level II, was administered to all incoming students. This subtest measures reading comprehension and vocabluary and is designed for use in grades 11 and 12 and with community college freshmen. Students who achieved scores lower than the 5th stanine on beginning grade 12 norms were required to take remedial reading.

The reading course at BMCC was based on the specific objectives of developmental reading prepared under the chairmanship of Dr. William S. Gray of the National Society for the Study of Education. The general goal of the course was to raise the reading level of students through the developmental reading objectives.

1. To develop the ability to comprehend the literal meaning of what is read.

   This objective constitutes the major portion of the course. Special exercises in reading for the main idea, outlining, and summarizing were provided. Additional work was given in comprehending and understanding the implied meaning of words. A continuous program of practice was employed to insure proper development of these skills.

2. To develop the ability to read materials of varying levels of difficulty and at the most efficient rate.

   To meet this objective, a wide range of materials at various levels of difficulty was made available to the students. Timed exercises, controlled reading and tachistoscopic techniques were employed.

3. To develop the ability to secure the broader meanings inherent in a passage.

   Materials were presented to give the student practice in getting the broader meaning of a passage; i.e., identifying the author's intent or purpose and his tone and attitude.

4. To develop ability to judge the relevancy, accuracy, or importance of the author's statements, the logic of his presentation, or the validity of his conclusions in the light of the author's purpose. The materials of the course, in combination with methods of reasoning, principles of rhetoric, and criteria for judging evidence, enables students to apply this knowledge.

The course sought to develop the following specific skills:

1. Speed of perception and reading rate.
2. Vocabulary development.
3. Dictionary usage.
4. Increased comprehension.
5. Intensive reading.
6. Thorough reading.
7. Study type of reading.
8. Understanding of broader meanings.
9. Evaluation of writing.
10. Skimming and scanning.
11. Reading in subject areas.
12. Reading technical and complex materials.

Following are the procedures employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the reading courses in upgrading the skills of the underprepared students who entered BMCC under the open admissions policy.

PROCEDURES

To determine the extent of change in the skills development of students in the remedial reading courses, alternate forms of the Reading Subtest of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK) Level II, were administered at midterm and at the end of the term. The results of these testing sessions for the Fall, 1974, and the Fall, 1975, semesters, were compared to the initial scores of students from the placement examinations. Final grades and gain scores (difference between pretest and posttest) were used as achievement criteria. The Chi-Square test of contingency was used to determine the relationship between final letter grade and initial stanines of selected classes held during the Fall, 1975, semester. Final grades were used for all semesters since the initiation of the program, to determine percentages of students meeting at least minimum requirements and thereby passing the course.

Since this study did not generate any new data (only secondary and previously analyzed data was used) the procedures were limited to the utilization of available data.

RESULTS

Gains in Reading Performance

For the Fall, 1974, and the Fall, 1975, semesters, the pretest, midterm, and posttest means of thirty (30) selected classes are presented in Table 1. The means for both semesters are almost identical. For the Fall, 1975, semester, the mean (31.48) on the pretest is equivalent to approximately the 7th grade reading level. The mean (45.32) on the midterm corresponds to about the 10th grade reading level. The students as a whole gained about three (3) grade levels from the beginning of the semester to the midterm. The mean (51.02) on the posttest is tantamount to a grade level of 11.2. On the average the students' gain in reading skills competence as measured by the TASK (Stanford Test of Academic Skills) Reading Test is about four grade levels in one semester. The overall differences in means from pretest to midterm, and from midterm to posttest are statistically significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 1

PRETEST, MIDTERM AND POSTTEST MEANS OF SELECTED CLASSES ON THE READING TEST OF THE STANFORD TEST OF ACADEMIC SKILLS

Term	No. of students	pretest mean	midterm mean	post-test mean	difference pretest-post
Fall, 1974	760	32.09	44.84	48.30	16.21
Fall, 1975	623	31.48	45.32	51.02	19.54

Table 2 presents the distribution of stanine scores on the TASK administered during the Spring, 1974, semester. The proportions increased for higher stanines and decreased for lower stanines. Whereas only 33.7% of the students obtained stanine scores of 5 or better at midterm, the percentage was raised to 47.6 % at the end of the semester.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STANINE SCORES OF SELECTED CLASSES ON THE READING TEST OF THE STANFORD TEST OF ACADEMIC SKILLS *

stanine	midterm	final
9	-	-
8	0.3	1.1
7	0.5	3.1
6	8.3	11.9
5	24.6	31.5
4	32.2	28.2
3	22.9	16.5
2	8.8	6.9
1	2.4	0.8

*sample size = 632

For the Fall, 1975, semester, the relationship between final grades and initial stanine on the TASK Reading Test is presented in Table 3, which indicates that nearly 50% of the students who scored in the first stanine on the pre-

test and more than 30% of those who scored in the second stanine had to repeat the course. On the other hand students who initially scored in the third and fourth stanines demonstrated almost equal performance relative to final grades. The Chi-Square test of contingency was employed by the BMCC Office of Instructional Testing to determine if final grades in reading were associated with initial stanine on the Task Reading Test. The test yielded a Chi-Square value significant at the .001 level.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FINAL GRADES AND INITIAL STANINE ON TASK READING TEST*
FALL, 1975

Initial stanine	R	C/D	B	A	TOTAL
1	25 46.3%	21 38.9%	4 7.4%	4 7.4%	54
2	65 30.5%	85 39.9%	40 18.8%	23 10.8%	213
3	25 14.7%	65 38.2%	52 30.6%	28 16.5%	170
4	10 11.6%	37 43.0%	25 29.1%	14 16.3%	86
TOTAL	125	208	121	69	523

Chi-Square = 40.705, Significant at the .001 level.

*From data analyzed by BMCC Office of Instructional Testing.

Final Grades

Data on the distribution of final grades was readily available from the Office of the Registrar and is presented in Tables 4 - 9. The tables present figures from the Fall, 1973, semester, to the Spring, 1976, semester inclusively. Table 4 presents figures for the Fall, 1973, semester during which time an aggregate of 289 students (34.2%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades; most of the 556 (65.8%) who passed received grades of A (21.2%) or B (28.8%).

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
FALL, 1973

Grade	N	Percent
A	179	21.2
B	243	28.8
C	134	15.8
R (Repeat)	227	26.9
Other	62	7.3
TOTAL	845	100.0

Table 5 presents the grade distribution of students taking the reading course during the Spring, 1974, semester. During the semester a total of 290 students (39%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades. Most of the 478 students (61%) who passed received grades of B (27%) or C (20%).

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
SPRING, 1974

Grade	N	Percent
A	111	14.0
B	210	27.0
C	157	20.0
R (Repeat)	159	21.0
Other	131	18.0
TOTAL	768	100.0

Table 6 presents the grade distribution of students taking the reading course during the Fall, 1974, semester. During this semester an aggregate of 441 students (36%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades. Most of the 743 students (64%) who passed received grades of B (29%) or C (20%).

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
FALL, 1974

Grade	N	Percent
A	164	14.0
B	343	29.0
C	234	20.0
D	2	1.0
R (Repeat)	361	30.0
Other	80	6.0
TOTAL	1184	100.0

Table 7 presents the grade distribution of students taking the reading course during the Spring, 1975, semester. During this semester a total of 518 students (44%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades. Most of the 640 students (56%) who passed received grades of B (21.5%) or C (22.2%).

TABLE 7

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
SPRING, 1975

Grade	N	Percent
A	131	11.0
B	247	21.0
C	256	22.0
D	6	1.0
R (Repeat)	444	39.0
Other	68	6.0
TOTAL	1152	100.0

Table 8 presents the grade distribution of students taking the reading course during the Fall, 1975 semester. During this time a total of 525 students (43%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades. Most of the 702 students (57%) who passed received grades of B(18%) or C (30%).

TABLE 8

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
FALL, 1975

Grade	N	Percent
A	100	8.0
B	221	18.0
C	371	30.0
D	10	1.0
R (Repeat)	369	30.0
Other	156	13.0
TOTAL	1227	100.0

Table 9 presents the grade distribution of students taking the reading course during the Spring, 1976, semester. During the semester 311 students (45%) received grades of R (Repeat) or other non-credit generating grades. Most of the 386 (55%) who passed the course received grades of B (17%) or C (28%).

TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL GRADES
SPRING, 1976

Grade	N	Percent
A	62	9.0
B	121	17.0
C	195	28.0
D	8	1.0
R (Repeat)	271	39.0
Other	40	6.0
TOTAL	697	100.0

The distribution of final passing grades from the Spring, 1973, semester, to the Spring, 1976, semester inclusively, is presented in Table 10. The initial reading course was offered in the Spring of 1973. At that time a small class of 284 students took the course. Of that aggregate 193 (68%) passed. In the Fall, 1973, semester, a total of 845 students registered for the course; of that aggregate 556 (65.8%) passed. In the Spring, 1974, semester, 768 students registered and 478 students (61%) passed. In the Fall, 1974,semester, 1184 students took the course and 743 (64%) passed. In the Spring, 1975, semester, 1152 students registered and 640 (56%) passed. During the Fall, 1975, semester, 1227 students enrolled in the course and 702 (57%) passed. The latest figures available at the time of this writing were for the Spring, 1976, semester. During this time 697 students enrolled in reading and 386 students (55%) passed

Since the Spring of 1973, to the Spring of 1976, the percentage of students passing the reading courses has ranged from 55% to 68%. The lower percentage of students passing (55%) was during the most recent semester of Spring, 1976. The highest percentage of students passing (68%) was during the initial course offering of the Spring, 1973, semester.

TABLE 10

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL PASSING GRADES;
SPRING, 1973, TO SPRING, 1976, INCLUSIVELY

Term	No. of students	No. passing	% passing
Spring, 73	284	193	68.0
Fall, 73	845	556	65.8
Spring, 74	768	478	61.0
Fall, 74	1184	743	64.0
Spring, 75	1152	649	56.0
Fall, 75	1227	702	57.0
Spring, 76	697	386	55.0

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted in a brief period of time using secondary data. Therefore it was limited to an analysis of available data. Courses in remedial reading at BMCC were offered since the advent of open admissions. However, in the early stages of open admissions the courses were electives. Beginning with the Spring, 1973, class however, the courses became mandatory for open admissions students found to be in need of remediation. At that time the Department of Developmental Skills used the Stanford Paragraph Meaning Test and the Cooperative Reading Comprehension Test. It was decided by the department that these tests did not have sufficient validity for BMCC students. It was decided that the variety of content found in the Reading Subtest of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills, Level II (TASK), more accurately reflected the objectives of the College remedial reading courses. This instrument was put into use beginning with the Spring, 1974, semester. Comparisons with earlier semesters are difficult because of the differences in the testing instruments utilized.

The results of the analysis of available data indicates that the remedial reading courses offered at BMCC do enable students to upgrade their skills.

By comparing means of the pretests, midterms and post-tests for two semesters, this study was able to demonstrate that students in the classes made gains in their overall reading performance that were statistically significant. In fact gains were demonstrated at midterm and again at the final exam. The total overall gain in reading skills competence as measured by the TASK was four (4) grade levels in one semester. This certainly demonstrates the effectiveness of the reading courses in upgrading the reading skills of underprepared students.

Considering the stanine scores of students in the Spring, 1974, semester, almost 50% of the students achieved stanine scores of 5 or better by the end of the semester.

Upon entering the College all students are required to take the TASK reading test for placement purposes. These are the pretests referred to in this study. Those who achieve a raw score of 49 or lower fall into the 4th stanine or lower. These students are required to take remedial reading. A raw score of 50 corresponds to about a grade 12 reading level. Students who score 50 or higher are exempt from remedial reading. They have been deemed ready for college level courses. Likewise, students in the remedial reading courses who achieve scores of 50 or better pass the course and are exempt

from any further reading remediation.

Although the gains in reading competence are statistically significant, only 55% to 65% of the students taking remedial reading actually pass the course by demonstrating grade 12 skills. The Chi-Square test of contingency used to determine if final grades in reading were related to initial stanine, yielded a Chi-Square value significant at the .001 level. This was used for the Fall, 1975, semester. This demonstrates that most of the students who are required to repeat the course are those who initially scored in the 1st and 2nd stanines. Success in the reading course then is related to the level of reading skills the student has when he enters the course. A student who enters the remedial course with a high level of reading skill has a better chance of passing the course than a student who begins with a lower level of skills development. Stated another way, a student who begins the course with a 9th or 10th grade reading level has a better chance of attaining 12th grade skills in one semester than a student who begins with only 5th or 6th grade skills. All students must attain a raw score of 50 (grade 12) on the TASK in order to pass the course.

The grade distributions from the Spring, 1973, semester inclusively, indicate that the percentage of students passing the course has declined from 68% to 55%. This decline may be due to several factors. The TASK test was not employed until the Spring, 1974, semester. Prior to that time 65% to 68% of the students passed. This may be due to differences in the testing instruments. Also during these semesters, teachers were able to employ greater judgment beyond the results of the test. If a teacher felt that a student was ready for college level courses he could pass that student regardless of the test scores. When the TASK test was introduced the department insisted on a raw score of 50 as the exit criterion. Therefore in looking at the grade distributions from the Spring, 1974, semester, to the Spring, 1976, semester, it may be generally concluded that the percentages of students passing the course also achieved a raw score of at least 50 on the TASK.

It may be safely stated that students passing the reading course during these semesters demonstrated at least a 12th grade reading level as measured by the TASK. This may be a rather high expectation for open admissions students. It has already been demonstrated that 45% of the students taking the course do not pass. The College

must raise the question as to whether or not this level of achievement is absolutely necessary to successfully pursue college level courses. Would students demonstrating 10th grade performance on the TASK be successful in college level courses? Has it been demonstrated that students with 12th grade skills in reading perform better in college level classes than students with only 10th grade skills? Once a student demonstrates reading skills at the 10th grade level would any higher score make much difference in his scholastic performance? These are research questions that the College should address in the future since the present practice of requiring the higher level skills may be depriving students of the chance to go on with college level work. Some students may not perform well on standardized tests but might be sufficiently equipped with reading skills adequate for the successful pursuit of college courses. Also, any standardized test can at best merely estimate a student's level of reading skills. For example a student may score 10 points higher or lower on a particular test on any given day. His score might be due to how he feels on a given day. It may be that the strict requirement of a raw score of 50 may be to rigid. Under present practice a student who scores 49 must repeat the course. Teacher judgment has not been employed in recent semesters.

Since success in the reading course is related to the student's initial reading skills it is clear that some students will not be able to achieve the exit criteria in one semester. It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to the possibility of expanding the reading courses into a sequence of levels. This would enable a student to begin a course where his chances for success would be realistic. He could then move to a higher level course the next semester and thus progress without the stigma of failure which characterizes the present program. Such a plan would not be too difficult to implement since the placement testing program at the College is well established. The placement test scores plus an item analysis would be most useful in planning an initial course of study for a student who falls into the 1st or 2nd stanine. These lower level courses could be offered on a non-credit basis. Students demonstrating lower than 8th grade skills would be given an opportunity to raise those skills to a realistic level over a period of one or two semesters. After one or two semesters of non-credit courses, a student might then be ready to pursue the credit bearing remedial course. The student would have achieved a higher level of reading skills and would therefore have a better chance for success as demonstrated by the results of this study.

In summary this study has demonstrated that the remedial reading courses at BMCC are effective in helping more than 50% of the open enrollment students to upgrade their skills in one semester to a level necessary to successfully pursue college level studies. Considering the results of this study recommendations have been made relative to the expansion of the remedial reading program to more effectively serve the underprepared open admissions students.

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